Colorado State Conservation Board 2007 Matching Grants Project: Douglas County Conservation District: Small Acreage Program

What natural resource problem(s) did the project address?

Many areas of Colorado face the situation of accelerating changes of land use from agricultural into 40 acre or smaller residential lots. Often the new owners of these lots have little experience or knowledge in land management and quite frequently are the unwitting hosts of populations of noxious weeds. By their nature, noxious weeds spread quickly and seed from small acreage lots infests other land, including productive agricultural land. Noxious weeds are hard to control and destructive to land productivity, biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Another consequence of land development for housing is the increased threat of wildfire damage and it's after effects to life and property in forested areas.

Douglas County Conservation District identified control of <u>noxious weeds</u> and <u>forest health</u> as two key issues associated with small acreage development in the District and offered cost-share for practices that addressed these two issues.

What was achieved?

- 827 acres of nine (9) noxious weed infestations treated
- 7,800_feet of cross-fencing erected on 72 acres to enable better grazing management and therefore lessened threat of noxious weed infestation/spread.
- Pipelines and 7 minimal-impact stock watering facilities installed to limit soil damage and resulting weed infestation around watering areas.
- Reforestation of 10 acres of the Hayman fire burn area to reduce soil erosion and benefit wildlife habitat
- 160 acres of forest thinning/dead tree removal to promote forest health and reduce wildfire and beetle infestation risk
- Total of 10 landowners participated and 1,069 acres impacted from pool of 16 applications
- Projects completed to federal conservation practice standards. All noxious weed projects will be monitored for a minimum of two years and receive preferential cost-share points to support continuing weed control efforts. Noxious weed control typically takes 3-5 years for most effective results.

A "healthy" stand of Leafy Spurge and Russian Knapweed noxious weeds on a small acreage property before and after treatment. Roots from a single recently established Russian Knapweed plant can cover up to 12 sq. yards in two growing seasons. Leafy Spurge, with its irritatant milky sap, is highly unpalatable to animals, one of Colorado's most aggressive destructive weeds and extremely difficult to control with roots up to 30 feet deep.

(Sources: Colorado State University/Colorado Department of Agriculture)



